

Message Text

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S E C R E T BOGOTA 5619

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XA, CU, UR, MPOL
SUBJECT: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS: COLOMBIAN REACTION TO
SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA

REF: STATE 148740

1. GOC VIEWS ON SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA ARE ESSENTIALLY SHORT TERM AND NARROWLY FOCUSED ON COLOMBIA'S OWN IMMEDIATE INTERESTS. THE GOC'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS, AS WELL AS ITS PRIVATE THINKING, ARE UNDOUBTEDLY COLORED BY THE NEED TO JUSTIFY COLOMBIA'S PRECIPITATE REESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA IN 1975, WHILE OAS SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA WERE STILL IN EFFECT. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ARE KEYED TO THE SUBJECTS RAISED IN REFTTEL.

2. PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO HAVE SEVERAL TIMES CONVEYED THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN AFRICA IN TERMS OF THEIR CONCERN OVER (1) THE POSSIBLE GROWTH OF CUBAN INFLUENCE AMONG THE BLACK POPULATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND (2) THE "TESTING" OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, WHICH THEY BELIEVE THE AFRICAN VENTURE REPRESENTS.

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3. COLOMBIA SEES ITSELF AS HAVING POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND OBVIOUSLY VIEWS THE PROSPECT OF A GROWTH OF CUBAN INFLUENCE IN THOSE AREAS WITH TREPIDATION. MORE PARTICULARLY, THE GOC BELIEVES THAT CUBA MAY BE ENCOURAGING WHAT IT CLAIMS ARE CURRENT JAMAICAN EFFORTS TO STIR UP THE BLACK POPULATIONS OF THE COLOMBIAN OWNED ISLANDS OF SAN ANDRES AND PROVIDENCIA, WHERE

THERE HAVE BEEN SYMPTOMS OF PRO-INDEPENDENCE SENTIMENT.

4. THE COLOMBIANS HAVE VOICED NO PRESCRIPTION FOR HANDLING THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED BY CUBAN-SOVIET ACTIVITIES. SINCE THE REESTABLISHMENT BY THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA, IT HAS DEFENDED THIS DECISION AND EVEN SOME CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES PROFESS SATISFACTION OVER THE PRESENT OR ANTICIPATED FUTURE BENEFITS OF TRADE WITH CUBA. GENERALLY, COLOMBIANS ARE CONTENT WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH CUBA. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, OR THAT WHICH WILL SUCCEED IT IN AUGUST 1978, WOULD SUPPORT SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA. THE GOC WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO SEE A "TOUGHER" US RESPONSE TO SOVIET-CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA BUT COULD NOT BE COUNTED ON TO SUPPORT SUCH A RESPONSE, EXCEPT POSSIBLY BY ITS VOTW IN THE OAS OR THE UN, IF A SIZEABLE GROUP OF OTHER LA OR THIRD WORLD NATIONS ALSO SUPPORTED THAT POSITION.

5. WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATIONS THAT THE GOC BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIET-CUBAN ROLE IS A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUE AMONG LA NATIONS.

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